

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 02970 300656Z
ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-02 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 ICA-20 SP-02
SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 /140 W
-----101919 010857Z /21

R 291623Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6988
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

UNCLAS MANAGUA 2970

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: TECH, ENGR, NU
SUBJECT: BACKGROUND FOR SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW

REF: (A) STATE 145840; (B) GUATEMALA 3628

1. OWING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF DEPENDABLE ENERGY SOURCES TO NICARAGUA'
S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTEREST SHOWN LOCALLY IN ENERGY MATTERS
,
EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT BRIEFLY ON CURRENT TREANDS IN THE
APPLICABILITY OF SOLAR AND OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF ENERGY
IN NICARAGUA.

2. SOLAR ENERGY: -) NICARAGUANS ARE AWARE OF THE RECENT TECHNOLOGICAL
AND PRODUCTIONS IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE SOLAR ENERGY FIELD IN THE
U.S. AND ARE BEGINNING TO INVESTIGAGE THE FEASIBILITY OF APPLYING
SOLAR ENERGY IN NICARAGUA. A LOCAL HOTEL OWNER IS INSTALLING SOLAR
PANELS TO BE USED IN THE HEATING OF HOT WATER FOR HIS NEWLY-
CONSTRUCTED HOTEL. ANOTHER BUSINESSMAN HAS APPROACHED THE EMBASSY
ABOUT LOCATING A U.S. JOINT VENTURE PARTNER FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF
SOLAR HEATING PANELS IN NICARAGUA.

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PAGE 02 MANAGU 02970 300656Z

B) FRANCIS DE WINTER, AN ICA-SPONSORED AMERICAN SPECIALIST SPEAKER,
RECENTLY GAVE TWO SPEECHES IN MANAGUA ON SOLAR ENERGY -- "SOLAR
ENERGY: PRESENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE POTENTIAL" AND "USE OF SOLAR
ENERGY IN THE COOLING OF BUILDINGS". APPROXIMATELY EIGHTY PERSONS
ATTENDED EACH LEACTURE AND APPEARED RECEPTIVE TO THE TOPIC. DE
WINTER POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT NICARAGUAN ENGINEERS AND INDUSTRIA-
LISTS MIGHT WISH TO AWAIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIMPLER TECHNOLOGY IN

SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT BEFORE SPENDING CONSIDERABLE SUMS ON THE SOHPISTICATED SYSTEMS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT NICARAGUA HAS A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR USING WOOD AND GEOTHERMAL SOURCES AS SUBSITTUTES FOR FOSSIL FUELS. HOWEVER, INDUSTRIES AND OTHER ENERGY USERS OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRIALLY DEVELOPED AREA OF MANAGUA AND NICARAGUA'S PACIFIC COAST REGION, MAY BE ABLE,IN THE FUTURE, TO MAKE GREAT USE OF SOLAR ENERGY, HE ADDED.

4. WIND ENERGY: IN 1975 THE COMMERCIAL OFFICER ATTEMPTED TO PROMOTE THE USE OF WINDMILLS AS AN ENERGY PROVIDER IN NICARAGUA. HE WROTE TO VARIOUS U.S. FIRMS AND SOCIETIES TO OBTAIN INFORMATION CONCERNING FACILITIES AND SERVICES OFFERED AND PUBLICIZED THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS INFORMATION. ALTHOUGH NOT A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST WAS SHOWN BY THE INDUSTRIAL OR AGRICULTURAL SECTORS, STUDENTS AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY-ASSOCIATED CENTRAL AMERICAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (INCAE), DID MAKE VARIOUS INQUIRIES ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF USING WIND AS AN ENERGY SOURCE. THEY APPARENTLY USED THE WIND ENERGY ALTERNATIVE IN VRIIOUS ACADEMIC EXERCISES DEALING WITH ENERGY UTILIZATION.

5. BAMBOO AS AN ENERGY FUEL: THE NATIONAL LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY (ENALUF) IS AMBITIOUSLY PURSUING THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLLISHING AN ELECTRICITY GENERATING PLANT POWERED BY THE BURING OF CANA BRAVA, A TYPE OF BAMBOO. THE 15 MW PLANT, WHOSE COST IS ESTIMATED AT US\$20 MILLION, WOULD BE LOCATED IN NICARAGUA'S EASTERN REGION WHERE SUITABLE LAND IS AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE.
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PAGE 03 MANAGU 02970 300656Z

6. AGRICULTURAL WASTES AS AN ENERGY SOURCE: VARIOUS GON AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN USING AGRICULTURAL BY-PRODUCTS AS ENERGY SOURCES. A LARGE LOCAL EGG FARM IS SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATING THE USE OF METHANE FROM CHICKEN MANURE TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR ITS OPERATIONS. (THE EXCESS POWER WOULD BE SOLD TO A NEARBY TOWN.) A LOCAL SUGAR CANE OPERATION IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING BIOMASS BY-PRODUCTS FOR ENERGY PRODUCTION AT ITS MILL AND REFINERY. IN ADDITION, VARIOUS RESEARCH GROUPS HAVE EXPRESSED INTERST.

7. EMBASSY SUPPORTS GENERAL SCOPE OF POLICY REVIEW AND IS PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN ASKED FOR COMMENTS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, SOLAR POWER
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MANAGU02970
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780272-0300
Format: TEL
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978068/aaaaaghy.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8a03c68c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 145840, 78 GUATEMALA 3628
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2429218
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BACKGROUND FOR SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW
TAGS: TECH, ENRG, NU, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8a03c68c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014